

Transit Commuting in America, 1990 to 2000

Notes

U.S. Counties

U.S. MSAs & CMSAs

36 Largest U.S. MPOs

About This Poster

This set of maps is based on journey-to-work data from the 1990 and 2000 Decennial Censuses. Data is derived from the "long form" census question on means of transportation to work. One-in-six U.S. residents filled out the census "long form." Transit commuting includes the modes: bus or trolleybus, streetcar or trolley, subway or elevated rail, railroad and ferryboat (and excludes taxicab passenger). Data is mapped at the county, metropolitan, largest metropolitan planning organization (MPO) region and state level. Data is provided for 3,219 counties, 280 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas (CMSAs), the 36 largest MPO regions (i.e., MPOs with a population greater than one million), and 52 states/state equivalents (including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico).

1. Change in Total Number of Commuters (1990 to 2000)

The total number of commuters in the United States increased from 116 million workers in 1990 to 129 million workers in the year 2000, an 11.4 percent increase. The most notable decreases in total commuters, 1990 to 2000, are in the Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, DC, and New York regions. Significant increases in total commuters are found in the Phoenix, Las Vegas, Houston, and Dallas-Fort Worth regions. Decreases in the number of total commuters can be attributed to absolute loss in total population, shifts in population by age and sex, or declining labor force participation rates. The total number of resident commuters in the San Francisco Bay Area increased by 7.1 percent between 1990 and 2000, rising from 3,086,000 workers in 1990 to 3,306,000 workers in 2000.

2. Transit Share of Total Commute (2000)

The United States Transit share of the total commute was 4.6 percent according to Census 2000. Of the 5,915,000 U.S. transit commuters, 98 percent reside in metropolitan areas, 86 percent reside in the largest MPO regions, and 38 percent (2,249,000) of the nation's transit commuters reside in the New York Metropolitan Area. The largest MPO regions with the highest transit shares in 2000 are: New York (36.7%), Boston (13.1%), Washington, DC (12.4%), Chicago (12.3%), Newark (10.8%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (9.6%). Brooklyn, New York (Kings County) has the highest transit share of all U.S. Counties, at 56.8 percent. San Francisco County (30.8%) has the highest transit share for all U.S. Counties west of the Eastern Seaboard.

3. Change in Transit Share of Total Commute (1990 to 2000)

The share of U.S. commuters using public transportation in their journey-to-work decreased from 5.1 percent in 1990 to 4.6 percent in 2000. Transit commute share decreased from 6.2 to 5.5 percent in all metropolitan areas, and decreased from 9.3 to 8.5 percent in major MPO regions. Significant increases in transit shares at the largest MPO level include Las Vegas (1.9% in 1990 to 4.4% in 2000), Portland (6.2% to 7.8%), Newark (9.9% to 10.8%), Boston (12.4% to 13.1%) and Seattle (6.4% to 7.1%). Significant decreases in transit shares at the largest MPO level include Chicago (14.4% in 1990 to 12.3% in 2000), Philadelphia (11.2% to 9.5%), Washington, DC (14.1% to 12.4%) and New Orleans (7.3% to 5.7%). Transit commute share in the San Francisco Bay Area increased from 9.4 percent in 1990 to 9.6 percent in 2000.

4. Change in Total Transit Commuters (1990 to 2000)

The total number of public transit commuters in the United States declined from 5,983,000 in 1990 to 5,915,000 in 2000, a drop of 68,000 average daily transit commuters. Pennsylvania (-55,000) and Puerto Rico (-46,000) had the most significant decline in public transit commuting. California (+47,000) and New Jersey (+34,000) had the most significant increase in public transit commuting. Significant increases at the largest MPO level include Newark (+31,600), Seattle (+26,800), the San Francisco Bay Area (+26,700), Las Vegas (+20,500) and Portland (+19,000). Significant decreases at the largest MPO level include Chicago (-42,600), Philadelphia (-39,700), New York (-22,500) and Washington DC (-21,200).

5. Percent Change in Transit Commuters (1990 to 2000)

Percent change in transit commuters generally follows the same pattern as the absolute change in transit commuters. Data values tend to be amplified in states, counties and metropolitan areas with a very small number of transit commuters in the base period. Puerto Rico (-49%), Nebraska (-31%) and Tennessee (-29%) show the largest percent decrease in transit commuting, 1990 to 2000. Nevada (+134%), South Dakota (+94%) and Oregon (+54%) show the largest percent increase in transit commuting. (South Dakota transit commuting increased from 747 to 1,450, and has the lowest number of transit commuters of all U.S. states.) MPO regions with the largest percent increase in public transit commuting include Las Vegas (+295%), Orlando (+54%), Portland (+52%), Denver (+42%) and Phoenix (+40%). MPO regions with largest percent decrease in public transit commuting include Kansas City (-33%), Cleveland (-20%), Indianapolis (-19%), Baltimore (-18%) and Detroit (-18%). Transit commuting in the San Francisco Bay Area increased by 9.2 percent in the 1990s, rising from 291 thousand transit commuters per weekday in 1990 to 318 thousand transit commuters per weekday in 2000.

